

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USNATO 01556 151953Z
ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: ALLIED VIEWS ON US FY-79 DEFENSE BUDGET

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1. PRELIMINARY ALLIED REACTION HERE TO THE FY-79 DEFENSE BUDGET HAS BEEN GENERALLY FAVORABLE, BUT MIXED WITH SOME CONCERN OVER REPORTED DECREASES IN PLANNED EXPENDITURES FROM PREVIOUS BUDGET PROJECTIONS AND REDUCTIONS IN SHIP-BUILDING PROGRAMS.

2. IT IS TOO EARLY TO EXPECT MORE THAN SKETCHY INITIAL REACTIONS. ALLIES DO NOT YET HAVE THE DETAILED INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR A FULL UNDERSTANDING AND MORE SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE TO THE "NATO BUDGET" AND, AT THIS STAGE, THEIR REACTION IS CONDITIONED PRIMARILY BY PRESS REPORTS AND SPECULATION. ALLIES WERE, OF COURSE, PLEASED WITH THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT TO THE NAC AND THEIR ATTENTION FOCUSED ON THE THREE PERCENT REAL INCREASE PLEDGE AND THE PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN 8,000-MAN INCREASE IN US FORCES IN EUROPE. AT THE SAME TIME, SOME EXPRESSED CON-

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PAGE 02 USNATO 01556 151953Z

CERN THAT THE THREE PERCENT REPRESENTED A DECREASE FROM THAT WHICH WE REPORTED IN DPQ(77).

3. WE EXPECT A MORE POSITIVE AND SUBSTANTIVE REACTION WHEN CAPITALS AND NATO STAFFS HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW SECDEF'S DEFENSE POSTURE STATEMENT, WHICH WE INTEND TO CIRCULATE. FOR THIS PURPOSE, WE WILL NEED ABOUT 50

COPIES.

4. THE ON-GOING FORCE PROPOSALS REVIEW WILL BRING ALLIES TO FOCUS ON THE US DEFENSE EFFORT. ALLIES WILL BE LOOKING TO THE US RESPONSE TO THE 1979-84 FORCE PROPOSALS AS A FURTHER EARNEST OF THE INCREASED US CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMON DEFENSE. WE SHOULD, THEREFORE, BE AS PROMPT AND FORTHCOMING AS POSSIBLE IN OUR REPLY TO THESE PROPOSALS. ALLIED QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS DURING THE SUBSEQUENT MULTILATERAL REVIEW (TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR LATE FEBRUARY OR EARLY MARCH) OF THE US RESPONSE WILL PROVIDE THE CLEAREST INDICATION OF ALLIES' REACTIONS TO THE FY-79 DEFENSE BUDGET. BENNETT

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